



Statement by

H.E. Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson  
Prime Minister of Iceland

at the

Sixtieth Session of  
the General Assembly of the United Nations

15 September 2005

Mr. President

Next year will mark the 60th anniversary of Iceland's accession to the United Nations.

Newly independent in 1946, the Icelandic people sought the clear recognition of sovereignty which membership of the UN gives. The need to reinforce the country's security through membership of an organisation committed to maintaining peace and security in the world was also an important consideration.

The sovereign equality between nations provided by the UN Charter, the promise to live in peace as good neighbours and the condemnation of armed force except in the common interest; all these were valuable principles which the new Republic of Iceland wished to subscribe to.

But Iceland has never looked on the UN as a mechanism solely for safeguarding sovereignty and for mediating relations between governments. The Charter addresses not only how we as governments conduct our relations between ourselves, matters of "sovereign equality" and "territorial integrity", but also how we conduct ourselves towards our own peoples, what the Secretary General has called "the accountability of states to their citizens". And indeed, how we conduct ourselves towards the peoples of other countries.

It is my view, that up to now, the key commitments to the peoples (rather than just to the governments) enshrined in the UN Charter have not been given their due weight. The text proposed for endorsement makes significant strides towards redressing this balance.

In particular, we have established the concept of the **responsibility to protect**. This idea is implicit in the UN Charter. It is therefore right that this summit underlines the responsibility that governments have to their people – and the duty of the international community to intervene in a timely and decisive manner if national authorities manifestly fail in their responsibilities.

With the creation of the **Human Rights Council** the UN will obtain a powerful tool in persuading states to live up to their responsibility to protect. It is in line with our decision to increase resources to the human rights machinery and will equip the UN to fulfill its duties towards its peoples, those individuals whose human rights need watchful and impartial protection. Work on this project must proceed rapidly.

The decision to establish a **Peace Building Commission** will provide another tool which will help to create a better future for individuals and nations. Iceland welcomes its foundation and believes that if it is given the necessary institutional weight it could achieve much in establishing lasting peace following conflict.

Large strides have been made on **development** matters. Still there is far to go if we are to attain the Millennium Development Goals. The clear recognition of the particular problems of Africa is most welcome. The clear restatement of the fundamental

responsibility and right of developing countries to conduct their own development – the importance of private investment capital and the massive increase in direct development aid promised by developed nations, is a major achievement.

The Doha round must also make significant progress towards creating an international trade regime which gives developing countries access to the globalised economy. Development assistance from developed countries has a vital role to play in the fight against poverty and injustice. But developing countries, with the help of the international community, need to create political and legal environments in which sustainable development has a real chance.

Iceland also welcomes the text on **terrorism**, although a universal definition is still needed. Terrorism is a threat to us all and must be condemned in all its forms. We therefore have a duty to conclude an international convention on terrorism by the end of this session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has made a great difference to many but it has also failed many. If we do not reform the Security Council, we will lack the necessary strength and power to protect and to secure and maintain peace. Iceland believes that, with the assistance of the President of the General Assembly, this matter can be settled before the end of the year.

Finally, Mr. President, we believe Iceland can make a contribution to peace and to the welfare of all Member States. It is for this reason that Iceland is for the first time a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2009 – 2010.